

Department of Human Services

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Articles in Today's Clips Friday, November 30, 2007

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<u>TOPIC</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
*Foster Care	2-4
Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	5-8
Juvenile Justice	9
Domestic Violence	10-15
Elder Abuse	16-18
Food Assistance	19-22
Housing	23
Charities	24
State Employees	25-26
News Release	27-28

*Important story at this spot

Neglected kids slept at Wayne Co. office

Foster home crisis left dozens with no beds, little food

November 30, 2007

BY JACK KRESNAK

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Dozens of abused and neglected children taken into protective custody in Wayne County have slept overnight in a state office building because of a shortage of foster homes, the Free Press has learned.

Since April, as many as 62 children -- from infants to teenagers -- spent at least eight hours at the Wayne County Department of Human Services Central Operations office in Detroit's Eastern Market without beds or adequate food, according to a report by the state Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing, a DHS unit that monitors child-placing agencies.

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DHS staff members initially said no children were being cared for at the office, according to the licensing bureau's Nov. 1 report, which the Free Press obtained Thursday.

Also, because of the severe shortage of foster homes in Wayne County, many of the children -- already traumatized by mistreatment at home -- were shuttled between DHS workplaces during the day. Staff members were expected to babysit them in offices not suited for child care, the report said.

Stephanie Miller, the DHS interim director for child and family services in Wayne County, said her office was working to correct the problems cited in the report.

She said 31 foster families willing to offer temporary crisis placements for children on a "no reject" basis have been identified. These foster parents will accept children for a limited time, regardless of behavioral issues.

The DHS also is working on a deal with Wayne County Community Mental Health for short-term placements for children in severe distress, Miller said.

Conference to address problems

The situation came to light as child advocates prepared for today's Save Our Children Summit, a conference at the University of Michigan-Dearborn to address problems facing the state's troubled foster care system. Three foster children have been killed in licensed foster homes in Wayne County since August 2006.

The new report "points out many of the problems that exist in the foster care system and the fact that there needs to be a concerted community effort to address this kind of travesty," said Gail Bagale, board member of Child's Hope, the Child Abuse Prevention Council of Out-Wayne County, an organizer of the conference.

Among the speakers at the conference at the Fairlane Center North, 19000 Hubbard Drive, will be Ismael Ahmed, the recently appointed director of the state DHS.

Last month, the DHS transferred case management of more than 200 foster children in Wayne County to private

agencies because of staff shortages at the DHS North Central Child and Family Services office in Highland Park.

The latest placement problems occurred in part because four or five temporary shelters operated by nonprofit agencies have closed in recent years.

The DHS slowed placement of abused or neglected children in such shelters in order to keep them in their neighborhoods with extended family members when possible. A new case assignment system was put in place in April 2006 to better match children to foster homes so they could attend the same schools and stay in touch with their families.

But the new system "hasn't worked out," said Bob Petti, regional director for Wolverine Human Services, which operates the last temporary shelter in Wayne County, a facility for boys on Detroit's east side.

"You have a lot of kids going into these temporary foster homes, bombing out and coming back into the system, and there's really no place to put them," Petti said.

According to the licensing bureau report, workers received a complaint April 17 that children were spending the night in the Eastern Market office, but staff members said children weren't being kept there overnight at the time.

The licensing bureau took no action until Aug. 31, when another complaint was received. This time, records at the office were examined closely and the bureau learned that from April through August, 62 foster children had spent at least eight hours in an office. Officials admitted Thursday that the practice continued into November.

Most who stayed were teen girls

Most of the children were teenagers -- the majority girls -- who came into care after 5 p.m. and spent the night at the Central Operations office at 2929 Russell St. The office also houses the Detroit police child abuse unit, Child Protective Services and other DHS workers who handle foster care, adoptions and other matters.

Some of the children stayed in an office as long as 24 hours, the report said. Among those who stayed overnight were an underage mother and her baby, who spent 10 hours there before getting beds in a foster home.

The lounge where the children stayed contains a play area for younger children and a sitting area for older youths with a couch, television, videos, radio and books. There is a separate bathroom where children can shower or bathe, the report said.

There also is a kitchenette with stove, refrigerator and microwave. When the licensing worker visited the office, the refrigerator contained a frozen pizza and a package of lunch meat. There also was a limited amount of baby formula, baby food and canned goods, the report said.

No other DHS county offices have reported problems with foster kids sleeping overnight in business offices, said licensing bureau director Jim Gale. He said most of the children involved are teenage girls with behavioral or psychological problems that make them difficult to place.

"It really does emphasize that we don't have enough foster homes to take the kids that are coming into care to meet their needs," Gale said.

The licensing bureau report noted that the Wayne County office has no worker assigned full-time to recruit foster parents. Miller said staff members go to community events to recruit foster parents and send out flyers, but "we are challenged in that area" of staffing.

Contact **JACK KRESNAK** at 313-223-4544 or jkresnak@freepress.com.

Director promises housing changes for neglected kids

Foster children had been forced to stay overnight in office

November 30, 2007

By JACK KRESNAK

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

The director of the state Department of Human Services told a gathering of child welfare advocates in Dearborn on Friday that the DHS can and will fix the problem of forcing dozens of foster children to sleep overnight in a state office building in Detroit.

Ismael Ahmed told the group of about 300 that he assigned his top deputy to find ways to stop the practice of holding children in the office building from eight to 24 hours as soon as possible.

Advertisement

Ahmed said he was grateful to the Free Press for its front-page article on Friday describing how the practice occurred, starting in April and affecting as many as 62 children from infants to teenagers. Ahmed said he was working to develop a new 15-bed temporary shelter for housing abused and neglected children when they are removed from their homes. Ahmed spoke at the "Save Our Children Summit — 2007" at the University of Michigan-Dearborn.

Organizers of the summit hope to develop strategies to improve the foster care system, particularly in Wayne County, where three children have been killed in foster homes since August 2006.

Contact **JACK KRESNAK** at 313-223-4544 or jkresnak@freepress.com.

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Stepbrothers to stand trial for dog's mauling of infant

Defense says death of baby girl a horrible accident

By Norb Franz

Macomb Daily Staff Writer

Two stepbrothers from Warren will stand trial for involuntary manslaughter after their pet Rottweiler mauled and killed a nearly 4-month-old girl.

A judge Thursday ordered Jason Winters, 22, and Christopher Fura, 19, to trial following testimony in their probable-cause hearing in Warren district court.

Defense lawyers representing the stepbrothers called the Sept. 12 incident in which Kylie Cox died a horrible accident, but said the pair should not be held liable for her death.

"The truth is there is nothing anybody could've reasonably done to prevent it from happening," said Winters' attorney, Daniel Garon.

The accused Warren men were among approximately 15 people visiting a Toepfer Avenue home described as a hangout for teenagers and young adults.

Alexis Cox, accompanied by a friend, arrived at the house with her infant daughter. She went to the kitchen to prepare a bottle of baby formula when she spotted Winters -- her boyfriend at the time -- and Fura with their dog, Chopper.

"When I seen the dog I asked why the dog was inside," Cox, 17, testified before 37th District Judge Walter Jakubowski.

She was told Chopper was inside because a smaller dog belonging to the woman who resides at the home was outside.

Moments later, she heard a friend screaming in the living room.

"When I walked in there, (Winters and Fura) were on top of the dog and the baby was on the floor," Cox said.

Eighteen-year-old Amanda Dash, who went to the hangout with Cox and Kylie, said she heard the infant crying shortly after they arrived. Dash said she had just unbuckled the child from a car seat on the floor when Chopper approached in a non-threatening way before grabbing the child's arm.

"The dog came in and grabbed the baby and started flinging it like it was a

toy," Dash tearfully testified.

"I said, 'Chopper, no!' and kicked the dog."

Warren firefighters transported Kylie to a local hospital where doctors pronounced her dead approximately 2 hours later.

Dash and Alexis Cox both testified they had seen Chopper or one of the stepbrother's other pet Rottweilers at the Toepfer house before, but that he never acted aggressively. Both said they were aware Fura was bitten about a week earlier by Chopper while trying to separate the dogs as the canines fought each other at the stepbrothers' home on Doepfer Avenue.

Cox, who witnessed that canine clash, said it frightened her. Questioned by Fura's attorney, Kenneth Vernier, whether she was still afraid after seeing Chopper while her daughter was in the nearby living room, she replied: "I didn't think about it."

Warren Detective Randy Costanzo, who interviewed Fura the night of the mauling, said Fura told him Chopper barked and appeared aggressive about five days earlier toward his girlfriend's toddler son. Fura claimed the woman who resides at the home let Chopper inside, Costanzo said.

Steve Kaplan, the Macomb County assistant prosecutor on the case, accused the stepbrothers of gross negligence to fit the involuntary manslaughter charge.

"It's their pet," he added.

Vernier argued nobody deserves prosecution for Kylie's death.

"Sometimes there's incredibly unfortunate accidents that don't need criminal charges," he said.

An involuntary manslaughter charge is punishable by up to 15 years in prison. Each of the stepbrothers also faced an additional charge of second-degree child abuse, but the prosecution dropped that charge Thursday.

Winters and Fura remain free on personal recognizance bond while awaiting proceedings in Macomb County Circuit Court.

Click here to return to story:

http://www.macombdaily.com/stories/113007/loc_n2001.shtml



Muskegon Chronicle

Resident charged in rape of girl, 4, at group home

Friday, November 30, 2007

By Lisa Medendorp

lmedendorp@muskegonchronicle.com

A 4-year-old girl visiting a relative at a Muskegon adult foster care home earlier this month was sexually assaulted by one of the residents, authorities said.

The resident, Shane Nicholas Gutierrez, 19, has been charged with two counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct with a person younger than 13 and with larceny from a person.

Muskegon police reported the offense occurred Nov. 18 at 1698 Sanford, an adult foster care home licensed through the state Department of Human Services.

Gutierrez faces preliminary examination Dec. 5. He was arraigned Nov. 21 before 60th District Judge Michael J. Nolan. A family surety bond of \$10,000 was posted by the defendant's mother.

Conditions of the bond are that he have no contact with the child involved in the case and that he obey his mother's rules. It is not known whether Gutierrez still resides at the foster care home or why he was originally placed there.

"By state law, I can't disclose any information," said the home's owner Kim Kornoelje of Spring Lake.

Maureen Sorbet, spokeswoman for the DHS, said there was an ongoing investigation into the incident and she could not comment further.

Muskegon Detective Sgt. Monica Shirey said the girl went to the home with a relative to visit another relative.

The girl was having dinner with her family members and at some point, when it was believed she was playing downstairs in the basement, she had gone into the kitchen, Shirey said.

That was where Gutierrez allegedly made contact with her and took her upstairs to his room, Shirey said.

Muskegon County Prosecutor Tony Tague said Gutierrez then sexually assaulted the child. "He gave her a gold coin not to tell anyone," he said. "She gave the coin to her (relative) and said he had taken her panties off."

Shirey said the in-home supervisor confronted Gutierrez and got the child's underwear from him. Police were called to the residence.

"This is a serious sexual assault against an extremely young female," Tague said. "We are concerned that an individual who has a history of sexual misconduct was allowed to have access to a young child in a state-licensed facility."

Tague said Gutierrez was convicted of second-degree criminal sexual conduct as a juvenile.

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Letters to the editor

Knowledge gives parents options with DHS

Editor,

I am writing this letter so that people will know that there is something that can be done about the Department of Human Services/Children's Protective Services and their [alleged] wrongful accusations and harassment.

I have learned that you never go to their office for questioning without an attorney or someone

who can give legal advice present even if they say that they only have a few questions and it is nothing serious. At the time, I didn't know my rights. Now I do and am urging anyone who they have [allegedly] wrongfully accused or harassed to report it to your senator and to write a letter of complaint to be put in your file at your local DHS office and to also send one to the main

office in Lansing at: Ingham County DHS, P.O. Box 30088, 5303 S. Cedar Street, Lansing, MI 48909, also to Senator Carl Levin's office at: 515 N. Washington, Suite 402, Saginaw, MI 48607-1370.

I have been wrongfully accused of child abuse and neglect and the case has been closed and dismissed on me twice and [Levin's office] is

helping me. Also contact our local ACLU American Civil Liberties Union at 313-578-6800 if you feel that your civil rights have been violated. They take complaints Monday and Wednesday from 1 - 4 p.m. or you can write to them at: ACLU of Michigan, 60 West Hancock, Detroit, MI 48201-1343.

— Summer Emma Mitchell
AnGrrr



Labeling juvenile offenders habitual makes sentences too long

FLINT JOURNAL LETTER TO THE EDITOR

TUSCOLA COUNTY

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Friday, November 30, 2007

By Brenda King

Journal Reader

Our prisons are full of level one and two prisoners, especially younger men.

Most of their crimes are juvenile acts, committed out of ignorance of youth. These people have been tagged habitual offenders.

At the same time, we have

people committing heinous crimes: murder, child abuse and neglect, rape, fraud, embezzlement.

If it's their first offense, they are not being sentenced within the amount of time the habitual offenders are getting sentenced. This is clearly wrong!

Our parole board people

need to take a good look at any and all applications for pardon or commutation of sentences they receive and embrace any and all input from the public, community and families of our prisoners.

Brenda King

Mayville

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Murder, suicide in Bessemer

By GARRETT NEESE, DMG Writer

BESSEMER — Two people are dead and a child wounded after a man's 10-hour standoff with police in Bessemer ended in a murder-suicide early this morning.

Thursday night, Michigan State Police officers surrounded the house where a 34-year-old man was holed up. The man's pregnant girlfriend and a 6-year-old boy who lived at the residence were also inside.

Police responded to a domestic disturbance call around 3:45 p.m. Eastern time, according to MSP dispatch reports.

An MSP Emergency Services team was dispatched to the house half an hour later after the man fired on officers.

The 6-year-old boy, Keegan Miller, was shot during the incident. Sgt. Al Graham of the MSP Wakefield post said police had not been responsible for the shooting.

Miller was taken to a nearby hospital before being transferred to St. Mary's in Duluth, Minn. He was in stable condition late Thursday.

About 2:15 a.m. today, police gained access to the home, where they found the dead bodies of the suspect and female victim.

Graham declined to release additional details beyond the post's initial release.

Miller is a first-grade student at Washington Elementary School in Bessemer. The school's principal, Mark Johnson, said the school has called in mental health workers to assist with any issues the students have. Additionally, school employees held crisis team meetings, where they went over signs of distress to watch for. Teachers read prepared statements at the beginning of class to dispel rumors that were already spreading, Johnson said.

Johnson described the school's reaction as a mix of curiosity and concern.

"So far, right now it's a lot of curiosity, because there has not been any real formal release from authorities, so there's a lot of curiosity about what happened ... I think we're going to see that until a formal release comes out," he said. "There's also a lot of concern for the young boy who was hurt."

Garrett Neese can be reached at gneese@mininggazette.com

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Article published Nov 30, 2007

Ex-wife testifies to Pratt's abusive behavior

Trace Christenson

The Enquirer

A second woman told a Calhoun County jury that Christopher Pratt frequently assaulted her during their eight-year relationship.

Sue Harrington testified Thursday that Pratt verbally abused her, often pushed her and choked her and once broke her arm during their marriage in the 1990s.

Pratt, 39, is on trial for domestic violence, felonious assault, destroying a telephone and unlawful imprisonment involving his former girlfriend, Norreen Parker, 35, on June 24 in their Fredonia Township home. If convicted he faces up to 15 years in prison.

Testimony continues Monday before Calhoun County Circuit Judge Stephen Miller.

Parker testified for four hours Wednesday about her 18-month relationship with Pratt, describing verbal and physical abuse leading to the incident in June when she alleged he threw chairs at her, smashed the phone as she was trying to call police and then briefly prevented her from leaving the home.

Harrington, also called by Chief Assistant Prosecutor Daniel Buscher to show a pattern of abuse by Pratt, testified, sometimes while crying, about her life with Pratt.

She said they married in 1991 about nine months after meeting and while Pratt traveled the state as a photographer.

But a few months before their first son was born in April 1992, he decided to change jobs "and when he was home with me all the time things started to go bad," Harrington said.

During one argument in 1993 while she was pregnant with her second son, she said he followed her, broke down their bedroom door and grabbed her by the neck while she was holding her 1-year-old baby, called her names and choked her.

"I didn't call the police," she said. "I loved him and I wanted it to work. I had a baby and I was pregnant and he told me things would get better and I was so naïve that I thought they would."

She described weekly physical abuse and frequently said, "I never knew why."

Once he reached into the car and slammed her head against the steering wheel, she said, and another time, when she couldn't provide directions during a car trip to Florida, he reached over and banged her head against the glass window.

Another time he grabbed her by the neck and lifted her off the ground before pushing her head against a toilet and, shortly before the end of their marriage, she said he grabbed her arm while she was trying to run away "twisted it back and it busted."

On their last day together, she said, she left a note in his briefcase, too afraid to tell him she was leaving. But Pratt found the note before leaving the house for work and Harrington said he threw the Christmas tree and then 15 Christmas mugs at her.

Pratt then went to the basement where he keeps his hunting guns, she said, but she called police and he fled.

"I was scared to death," she told the jury.

Defense attorney J. Thomas Schaeffer objected to the testimony from so many years ago, arguing it was not relevant to the current case and was merely prejudicial to his client. During cross examination he noted that Harrington and Pratt have had an ongoing legal battle over custody for their two boys.

Harrington denied she hit Pratt other than trying to push him away or that she began the arguments.

"It was pretty much one-way arguments of him getting mad and coming after me," she said.

Pratt is a person of interest in the March 2004 disappearance of Mary Marshall Lands, according to the Marshall Police Department.

Pratt and Lands, 39, were engaged and living together in Marshall when she disappeared. Pratt told police she left their townhouse after an argument but has denied any involvement in her disappearance.

Lands has not been seen since and no arrests have been made in the case.

Trace Christenson can be reached at 966-0685 or tchrist@battlecr.gannett.com.

THE MINING Journal

Local News

> [News](#) > [Local News](#)

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Sands man cops plea in assault on woman

By KIM HOYUM, Journal Staff Writer

POSTED: November 30, 2007

MARQUETTE — A Sands man who was arrested in July after fleeing to Dickinson County during a domestic violence investigation pleaded no contest to an assault charge Thursday.

Gary Lee Pegenau, 43, of 255 Youngs Road in Sands Township entered the plea on a charge of assault with intent to do great bodily harm less than murder before Judge John R. Weber in Marquette's 25th Circuit Court. The charge is punishable by a maximum of 10 years in prison.

A no contest plea is not an admission of guilt but is treated as such for sentencing purposes. Marquette County assistant prosecuting attorney Matthew Wiese told the court the no contest plea was entered for reasons of possible civil liability.

In Pegenau's plea agreement, one charge of unlawful imprisonment was dismissed, along with charges of felony child abuse in a separate circuit court case and a district court case charging Pegenau with intimidation of a witness, Wiese said. The agreement also states no further charges will be brought in those criminal cases.

Pegenau also agreed to give up the right he usually would have to withdraw his plea if the judge departs from the prosecutor's sentencing recommendations. That recommendation is to give Pegenau the minimum allowed under state sentencing guidelines, Wiese said.

The assault charge stems from an incident on July 24 at Pegenau's residence.

Wiese said Pegenau had a verbal argument with his then-girlfriend, who was identified by police as a 24-year-old Marquette woman.

In a statement outlining the prosecutor's case, Wiese said Pegenau used duct tape to bind the woman's hands and mouth, then punched and kicked her, threw her to the floor and strangled her. Pegenau's attorney, Thomas Casselman of Marquette, accepted the statement as a factual recounting of the incident.

Pegenau originally was arrested on a three-count warrant from the Marquette County Sheriff's Department alleging torture, assault and imprisonment after deputies conducted an investigation into a domestic violence complaint. At the time, police said they attempted to serve arrest and search warrants on Pegenau and believed he had armed and barricaded himself inside his home. He was not found in the

Article Photos



PEGENAU

residence then, and was thought to have fled from police when they arrived.

He was arrested two days later in Channing by troopers from the Iron Mountain post of the Michigan State Police without incident and was brought back to Marquette, where he has been lodged in the county jail since.

Pegenau's sentencing is scheduled for Dec. 19.

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Detroit Free Press

Detroit news briefs

November 30, 2007

Domestic violence arrests net 40

In the latest wave of arrests under the anti-domestic violence program Project Safe House, Wayne County officials announced Thursday that about 40 of the most-violent offenders have been arrested in the past two days.

Wayne County Sheriff Warren Evans, Wayne County Prosecutor Kym L. Worthy and Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano were present at a news conference to stress the mission of the program that targets those who fail to show up for court on a domestic violence-related charge or have violated their probation on a domestic violence conviction.

All three highlighted the need to curb domestic violence that has been increasing since 2005 in the county. Worthy said the county was on track to see 7,000 warrants issued for domestic violence for 2007.



New team targets elder abuse

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Friday, November 30, 2007

By Shena Abercrombie

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FLINT - Linda Moore can't spot all the problems of patrons at the busy Carman-Ainsworth Senior Center in Flint Township, where she serves as director.

That's where a new team to protect the elderly from abuse comes in.

"Here, everybody knows everybody, we're like a family," said Moore, a 20-year veteran of senior centers. "If I see a senior isn't doing well, (many times) I've picked up the phone and called other members of the family. (But) a lot of times, we at the center don't see the financial end of it."

Predators who physically abuse seniors or exploit them financially are on a new hit list: that of the recently formed Elder Abuse and Exploitation Prevention Team.

The team is a collaborative effort among the Genesee County Sheriff's Department, Genesee County Probate Court, the Genesee County Prosecutor's office and the Center for Gerontology.

Members of the month-old team met Thursday to announce a \$700,000 grant from the Genesee County Metropolitan Planning Commission Senior Services Millage.

Genesee County Sheriff Robert J. Pickell said the group's focus will be prosecution as well as prevention.

"There's no model for this anywhere else in the state," Pickell said. "This is really new. In very few states do they have such a collaborative effort."

Pickell said the team will conduct in-depth investigations into nursing homes and caregiver facilities, as well as conducting background checks for those who petition the court for legal guardian status of elderly residents - even family members.

"Oh, that's a wonderful idea," Moore said. "That just made my day. I've been fortunate here to have seniors with families who are very good to them, but seniors are very trusting."

Already, the team has investigated 17 cases of suspected elder abuse, and individuals have been charged in five cases, officials said at a news conference.

More are expected.

In 2006, there were 80,000 victims of abuse over the age of 60 in the state and 390 from Genesee County, said Pickell during the news conference.

Genesee Probate Judge Jennie E. Barkey pointed to the recent high-profile case of Shannon H. Pitcher, a former attorney who was sentenced to prison this month for embezzling \$288,137 from 27 of her clients.

QUICK TAKE

Team leader

Diane Nimms was appointed director of the new Elder Abuse and Exploitation Prevention Team, which will be housed at the Genesys Center for Gerontology at the West Flint Campus, 3919 Beecher Road. Details: (810) 762-4550.

"I would like to say that was an isolated incident, but it's not. Now we have a mechanism in place that also has a preventative component," Barkey said.

Local senior advocates are optimistic about its impact.

"I think if people know there is somebody watching and there's going to be a follow up and potential legal action, they'd be less likely to do that," said Kathryn Boles, executive director for the Valley Area Agency on Aging. "From our perspective, these cases are growing. My case managers see cases that involve elder abuse on a daily basis."

Currently, agencies such as VAAA and local senior centers such as the Carman-Ainsworth center in Flint Township and the Clio Area Senior Center in Vienna Township, have reported cases of suspected elder abuse to the Department of Health and Human Services Adult Protective Services unit.

"Our center has been used as a site for the agency to interview clients away from family members," said Ann Anderson, CASC director. "It's an excellent idea. It'll be interesting to see how this new program works."

She fears, however, that some cases will continue to slip through the cracks.

"I do think elderly people are taken advantage of more often than we know, but most occur in households where the family members do not go through the courts to petition for legal guardianship," Anderson said.

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Genesee County is cracking down on elder abuse

New program designed to protect seniors



By Shannon Johnson

GENESEE COUNTY (WJRT) - (11/29/07)--A new effort to protect senior citizens from being financially and physically abused in Genesee County is underway.

Thursday, Sheriff Robert Pickell announced the Elder Abuse Prevention Program -- made possible by the senior mileage Genesee County voters passed in a recent election.

The program is made up of a collaboration of people from the sheriff's department, persecutor's office, as well as health care and social workers.

Social workers and health personnel will now make sure that anyone who has guardianship or is applying for guardianship over an elderly person is taking care of them properly. If the elder is not being taken care of properly, appropriate action will be taken -- including prosecution.

Diane Nims is the director of the new program. "Rather than just an investigator, you have a whole team coming together to make a determination," she said.

Those who want to report elder abuse now have a specialized team to call. Social workers will also be keeping a closer eye on assisted living facilities.

The Bush administration is also hoping to shame some nursing homes into improving patient care by posting a list of the facilities considered among the worst in their states.

Lawmakers and advocacy groups had been pushing the administration to make it easier for consumers to identify substandard homes.

56 nursing homes in 33 states and Washington D.C. are on the list. The list does not include any facilities in Michigan.

For a complete list, visit the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Web site](#).

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Advertisement





Food bank sets high goal with confidence in community

FLINT

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Friday, November 30, 2007

By Holly Klaft

Journal Staff Writer

'Tis the season for giving.

And this year, just a little generosity could go a long way toward helping hungry area residents.

Collection envelopes are included in today's Flint Journal to benefit the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan's Face of Hunger holiday campaign.

Every \$1 donated to the annual fundraiser helps the Flint-based nonprofit provide \$14 worth of food and other items to its nearly 400 partner agencies that help put meals on the tables of needy families.

The food bank kicked off its campaign Wednesday with a goal to raise \$662,000 during the monthlong effort.

It's the agency's highest goal yet, and the food bank is depending on the community's strong philanthropic track record to help feed the growing number of hungry.

"We have a hard and lofty goal to work for," food bank President Bill Kerr said Wednesday. "With your help, we will accomplish that, if not exceed it."

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11/29/2007

Kids Klub collects food for food pantry

The Huron Daily Tribune

On Nov. 7, the kids from Kids Klub went out and hung white grocery bags on their neighbors' doors, asking for bags to be filled with food for the New Life Center Food Pantry.

On Wednesday, Nov. 14 they returned and collected 37 bags filled with food for the food pantry. The Kids Klub is directed by Laura Vogel, Sandy Squillace and Sylvia Wisner. Jan Snyder, Tami Kopah assisted in driving the kids around to collect the filled grocery bags. The kids delivered the bags of groceries directly to the New Life Center Food Pantry where Ernest Rosteck, food pantry director, and his wife, Veronica, were waiting for the kids.



The News-Herald

A Heritage Newspaper

Artists create grass-roots effort to feed the poor

By Andrea Blum
, The News-Herald

Fill your stomach with a hearty meal of soup and bread while helping fill the stomachs of less fortunate people this holiday season.

This marks the 13th year that the Wayne County Community College District's Artists' Guild will participate in the Empty Bowls program.

"Over the past 12 years, we have made and distributed approximately \$50,000 to Downriver charities (that) feed the hungry," fine arts and humanities professor Carl Kamulski said.

The Empty Bowls concept was the brainchild of a Michigan art teacher back in 1990 and since has grown into an international phenomenon.

Kamulski started an Empty Bowls program at the school 12 years ago to help feed hungry people in the Downriver area.

WCCCD students have been busy glazing the 500 bowls used in the fundraiser and also selling the \$10 tickets to take part.

Rovin Ceramics donates the 300 pounds of clay used to fashion the one-of-a-kind bowls.

At the event, guests choose their own specially designed bowls and enjoy all-you-can-eat soup and bread. Local restaurants and bakers donate all the food and utensils.

Afterward, guests take the bowls home as a reminder of hunger in the world and of how they helped fight it.

They also decide which local charities receive profits from the event.

At least eight charities receive checks for up to \$500 each from the fundraiser.

"This is a wonderful grass-roots effort to make the holiday season a little better for many of our neighbors and friends," Kamulski said.

This year's event runs from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Wednesday at Veterans of Foreign Wars Post No. 4422, 11590 Pine St., Taylor.

The goal is to raise between \$4,000 and \$5,000, 100 percent of which goes directly to charity.

Last year, the fund-raiser garnered more than \$4,200 for local charities. Among those organizations benefiting from past events are Maryhaven, First Step, the Salvation Army and Taylor Goodfellows.

Donations also are being sought for a raffle to coincide with the Empty Bowls event.

Anyone with an item to spare — suggested donations include candy, wine, artwork or other new or never used items — should contact Brenda Jordan at brendaann1@hotmail.com or at 1-313-383-8639 or Felicia Woody at felicia711@comcast.net or 1-313-383-0942.

Donated raffle items also can be dropped off, along with a note including your name, at the Fine Arts Department on the WCCCD campus, 21000 North Line Road, Taylor.

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http://www.thenewsherald.com/stories/113007/loc_20071130006.shtml



THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

County eyes low-income housing grant

Friday, November 30, 2007

BY TOM TOLEN

The Livingston Community News

A \$250,000 grant given preliminary approval by the Livingston County Board of Commissioners, enabling Venture Grand River Shores to refurbish apartments for low-income and other qualifying residents in Brighton, Howell and Fowlerville.

The county has fiduciary responsibility for the federal Community Development Block Grant, which is administered by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority.

The grant will enable Venture, the housing subsidiary of the Oakland Livingston Human Services Agency, to repair and upgrade 20 of 33 apartments.

The improvements will include furnace repair or replacement, new carpeting, plumbing work, window treatment and other interior projects to be performed this winter.

Donald Jones, president of Venture Inc., OLHSA's housing subsidiary, says OLHSA will seek other grants to complete the remainder of the units.

"We hope to get additional dollars from MSHDA to do more (apartments)," he said after Monday's health and human services committee meeting.

A difference of opinion over the amount OLHSA felt it should receive for administrative services has been resolved. The agency has agreed to a \$28,640 fee for its services, and the county will receive \$7,000 for its services for a total of \$35,640, leaving \$214,000 for the actual work.

The apartments were previously owned by Great Lakes Nonprofit Housing Corp.; MSHDA assumed ownership when the company was dissolved.

OLHSA, which provides programs for low-income, disabled and elderly persons, subsequently took over the properties.

The grant is expected to gain final county board approval at its meeting Monday.

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[From Lansing State Journal]

Schneider: Bad economy weakens effort to cheer needy kids

Santa Claus is sweating. With only six days to go, 220 needy kids on the Christmas list of Operation Good Cheer remain unspoken for.

Sharon Vichcales, director of Child and Family Services of Michigan Inc., the Okemos-based nonprofit agency that runs Operation Good Cheer, said Thursday that while the situation is disconcerting, it's not exactly surprising.

"The economy is bad," Vichcales said. "People are laid off ... fuel and heating costs are up ... a lot of big corporations are cutting back ... "

For example, workers at Ford's assembly plant in Wixom alone once provided gifts for 300 Operation Good Cheer kids. That plant no longer exists.

Charitable impulse

It was a group of Ford employees, who, in fact, in 1971, decided to channel the money they normally spent on Christmas cards into something else. They approached Child and Family Services and ended up sponsoring 66 needy kids.

Last year, 248 donors provided Christmas gifts for 4,535 individuals in authorized out-of-home residential/group or foster care homes throughout Michigan. That includes children and adults with disabilities.

Child and Family Services is a private, nonprofit, statewide, nonsectarian social service organization that has existed since 1891.

The Operation Good Cheer gifts will be distributed Dec. 7 and Dec. 8. Donations are due Dec. 6. If you wish to help, call (517) 349-6226.

Between The Lines Newspaper

From issue number 1548

[Return to PrideSource](#)

Governor prohibits discrimination in state employment on the basis of gender identity and expression

by Todd A. Heywood

Originally printed 11/29/2007

Capitol Correspondent

LANSING --

As many Michigan citizens prepared for the Thanksgiving holiday, Michigan Gov. Jennifer Granholm gave transgender employees a holiday gift. She signed an executive order that prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender identity and expression.

The five-page order, signed Nov. 21, states, "To build a more inclusive Michigan our state government must be a model of tolerance, accessibility, equal opportunity -- reaching out to people, knocking down barriers, and dispelling prejudices which hold Michigan back."

The order covers an estimated 95 percent of the nearly 50,000 state employees and directs the Civil Service Commission to adopt rules to address discrimination issues around gender identity or expression. The category is designed to address not only transgender individuals, who are persons who believe their biologic genders are different from their psychologic gender, but also those who do not necessarily fit into traditional gender roles. For instance, a heterosexual male who is effeminate and who is not promoted because he is perceived as not manly enough would now have a way to file a grievance.

The governor signed an executive order in 2003 prohibited discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Sexual orientation defines whether a person is homosexual, heterosexual or bisexual, while gender identity or expression refers to the gender, male or female, with which a person feels most comfortable identifying.

Megan Brown, a spokeswoman for the governor, said there were no specific examples of discrimination that prompted the executive order. "We have had some concerns expressed and we wanted to address those concerns," Brown said. "We wanted to be proactive."

The executive order is being broadly praised by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender organizations and leaders.

"Michigan Equality applauds the governor's action," said Derek Smietka, executive director of Michigan Equality. "We hope the Legislature follows suit."

"Governor Granholm's Executive Directive 2007-24 is a strong step in the right direction for civil rights in Michigan," said Julie Nemecek. Nemecek was fired from Spring Arbor University, a conservative Christian university south of Jackson, earlier this year when she came out as a transgender person. After her firing, her case drew national attention. She filed an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission complaint and settled out of court for an undisclosed cash sum. "This non-discrimination protection is the right thing to do fiscally, legally and morally. The only question left is whether our state legislators will lead in getting comprehensive and inclusive state laws or come on board kicking and screaming."

"We applaud Governor Granholm for her integrity and leadership in sending a message that discrimination will not be tolerated. With this move the governor is setting an example for all employers that people should be judged by their ability to do the job," said Triangle Foundation Director of Policy Sean Kosofsky. Triangle Foundation is a Detroit-based organization that monitors hate crimes and works on legislation for the LGBT community. "We can only hope that our national leaders, who are currently debating whether or not to protect transgender workers in federal law, will share our governor's vision."

The order was signed following the passage of the federal Employment Non-discrimination Act (ENDA) in the U.S. House of Representatives. The bill passed did not include protections based on gender identity and expression. The state government joins Michigan State University, the University of Michigan and the city of Lansing in prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender identity or expression.

"This just shows that the state of Michigan is moving in the right direction in regards to state employees," said Michelle Fox-Phillips, executive director of Transgender Detroit.

"We applaud Governor Granholm's executive directive prohibiting discrimination in state employment on the basis of gender identity/expression," said Kara S. Suffredini, state legislative director for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "During her second inaugural address, the governor spoke about the 'Next Michigan,' one of 'transformation and opportunity.' Today's directive brings Michigan one step closer to that vision."

But not all Michigan residents are happy with the decision. James Muffet, president of the Citizens for Traditional Values, told the Associated Press he doubts there is an issue with discrimination on the basis of gender identity or expression in the state, but felt the decision to sign the executive order was a matter of political paybacks. Muffet told the AP the governor was paying back the LGBT community for its support in her 2006 election.

Replying to Muffet's criticisms, Granholm spokesperson Brown said: "The bottom line is that the governor did this because she believes discrimination is wrong."

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JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
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News Release

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Michigan Department of Human Services

Poverty forums upcoming in Sault Ste. Marie and Kalamazoo *Commission on Community Action and Economic Opportunity hold events that, in part, lead to upcoming poverty summit*

November 30, 2007

Michigan Commission on Community Action and Economic Opportunity will hold forums in Sault Ste. Marie and Kalamazoo in December to hear directly from Michigan individuals and families who are living in poverty. They are part of a series of five forums to be held across the state that will lead to Michigan's first poverty summit in early 2008. The forums will be held:

- **Friday, Dec. 7 from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. at Avery Square Atrium, 510 Ashmun St. in Sault Ste. Marie.**
- **Thursday, Dec. 13 from 4-7 p.m. at First Baptist Church of Kalamazoo, 315 W. Michigan Ave., in Kalamazoo.**

Other forums are tentatively being scheduled in Clare, Detroit and Flint to take place during January and February 2008. The sponsoring state commission was established by Gov. Jennifer Granholm in 2003 and is charged with advancing state policies and programs to reduce poverty and to address the needs and concerns of low-income people.

The forums will provide a vehicle for people living in poverty to share their stories and life experiences as they pursue economic self-sufficiency. The commission hopes to gain first hand knowledge of what families and individuals face when accessing public and private support systems.

"We want to find out what works at the grass-roots level, what programs are innovative in helping people move out of poverty. We think that it is vitally important that we hear the stories and experiences of people who deal with poverty every day as part of this process" commission chairperson Sonia Harb said.

The commission is supported by the Department of Human Services' Bureau of Community Action and Economic Opportunity.

(more)

"Poverty has quietly ascended in Michigan in the new millennium," said Ismael Ahmed, director of Michigan Department of Human Services. "Almost two million people live in or near poverty in Michigan including almost a half-million children. Since the new century started, an additional 330,000 state residents have fallen into poverty.

"This is an issue nationwide, not just in Michigan, and it has special meaning here with the ongoing weakness of our state economy."

The commission is working in a state-wide partnership with the Michigan League for Human Services, a Lansing-based non-profit organization dedicated to education, research and advocacy for the benefit of low income and other vulnerable citizens. The Michigan Community Action Agency Association, a membership organization for the 30 community action agencies that provide human service programs in all 83 counties, is the other principal partner.

The commission is also working local organizations and coalitions including the Kalamazoo Poverty Reduction Initiative led by the Kalamazoo Chamber of Commerce. In addition to hearing testimony from consumers of state welfare programs, the commission is encouraging local service organizations to provide details of innovative programming that has resulted in positive outcomes for the poor.

For more information contact commission member [Daniel Piepszowski](#) at 313-689-0171

For more information go to www.michigan.gov/dhs